
215.70

Nutrition and Health Assessment

Overview

Introduction

Nutrition and health interview assessments are the components of a comprehensive nutrition assessment completed at each WIC certification. Data collected in WIC clinics includes:

- Nutrition practices,
 - Anthropometric measurements (weight and length/height),
 - Blood tests (hemoglobin or hematocrit),
 - Current and past medical conditions,
 - Oral health,
 - Lifestyle,
 - Social Environment,
 - Immunization status, and
 - Access to ongoing health care.
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Policy

Nutrition and health interview questions are completed in the state data system at each certification visit using the standard questionnaires developed by the state WIC office.

Purpose of nutrition interviews

Nutrition interviews are completed for many reasons including the following:

- Identify behaviors affecting food intake and nutritional status,
 - Evaluate typical eating patterns,
 - Assess whether the diet is age-appropriate,
 - Identify parental/participant concerns about nutrition feeding,
 - Assess nutrition education needs so that timely and appropriate anticipatory guidance can be provided,
 - Determine adequacy of food resources,
 - Identify intake of potentially dangerous non-food substances and dangerous foods (such as alcohol or foods commonly associated with choking),
 - Establish nutrition risk and eligibility for WIC services, and
 - Assess need for referrals to other health care providers, nutrition programs, and other assistance programs.
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Overview, Continued

Purpose of health interviews

Health **interviews** are completed to:

- Determine medical nutrition risks for participants,
- Determine access to health care,
- Identify health education needs, and
- Make appropriate referrals.

Sources of data

For most participants, health data is collected at the WIC clinic. However, the participant's health care provider may also provide health data (see Policy 215.63).

Interview techniques

Good interviewing skills are important to establish rapport and obtain accurate and complete information. The following techniques improve the quality of information obtained in interviews.

- **Introduce yourself.** Explain what is going to happen during the time you spend with the applicant.
- **Communicate a non-judgmental and interested attitude.** Give your undivided attention to the applicant. Do not criticize or prematurely express your opinions.
- **Listen.** Pay close attention to detail, storing information mentally for later evaluation. Do not assume anything until the applicant tells you it is so.
- **Use open-ended questions when you can.** Limit the use of directive or closed questions (questions that can be answered yes or no) when possible.
- **Elicit the applicant's concerns, hopes, and expectations.** Determine if any fears or concerns exist and identify how the applicant thinks you can help.
- **Be aware of nonverbal communication.** Note facial expressions, body language, posture, and signs of emotions. Observe the interaction between a mother and her children.
- **Acknowledge that you understand.** Let the applicant know you have understood and accepted the information shared before offering any specific advice.
- **Don't let hostility be a communication barrier.** Bring it to the open. Ask, "You seem to be angry with me, can you tell me why?" When you feel yourself becoming angry, ask yourself, "Why?"
- **Separate the interview and data collection from education and counseling.** Collect all of the information first so you have the whole picture to review. It is confusing to applicants to switch roles from providing information to receiving information. However, if an applicant asks for information, it is acceptable to answer the questions. A brief answer may be best, with assurance the further discussion will come when you have completed collecting information.

Health Interview Procedure

Overview It is strongly recommended that all pertinent health interview questions are asked of each applicant. However, the RN, LPN, or CPA can exercise professional discretion about which questions to ask based on the applicant's overall risk profile.

Who can complete health interviews? LPNs and any health professional that can function as a competent professional authority (CPA) can complete health interview questionnaires (see Policy 310.08).

Procedure The table below summarizes the procedure for completing the health interview questionnaires in the data system.

Step	Action
1	Ask the health interview questions relevant to the applicant's categorical status.
2	Ask additional follow-up or probing questions to clarify responses, collect more information, or determine if a risk is applicable.
3	Assign any risk codes supported by responses to the questions. <u>Note:</u> LPNs may record responses on the health interview questionnaires but cannot manually assign risk codes.

Nutrition Practices Procedure

Policy

It is strongly recommended that all pertinent Nutrition Practices questions are asked of each applicant. However, the CPA should exercise professional discretion about which questions to ask based on the following:

- The applicant's risk profile (i.e. presence of a medical nutrition risk);
 - Relevance of each question to the applicant's age, developmental status and/or categorical status; and
 - Previous response(s) to the same question.
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Who can complete the Nutrition Practices panel?

Any health professional that can function as a competent professional authority (CPA) can complete the Nutrition Practices panel (see Policy 310.08).

Note: The Iowa WIC program strongly encourages local agencies to employ licensed dietitians to provide this service.

Procedure

The table below provides guidance for CPAs.

If the applicant has...	Then ...
At least one medical nutrition risk	Ask selected nutrition questions that may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information or insight about the medical risk, • Address any concerns identified by the parent/guardian/applicant, • Determine nutrition education needs, • Assist in food package design, and • Identify potential referral needs.
No medical nutrition risks	Ask all nutrition questions appropriate for the child's age and developmental status or the woman's categorical status to determine whether any dietary risks exist.

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Nutrition Practices Procedure, Continued

Using the nutrition practices questions in the data system

The questions that appear in the data system provide structure and a starting point for completing the nutrition practices questions. CPAs are encouraged to:

- Rephrase questions to fit their interviewing style or to improve the applicant's understanding; and
- Ask additional follow-up or probing questions to clarify responses, collect more information, or to determine if a risk is applicable.

Note: CPAs are cautioned against asking all of the questions as closed questions or rephrasing questions in such a way as to result in leading questions (i.e. the applicant can perceive the “right” or “acceptable” answer to the question.)

Assigning risks

All relevant nutrition risks should be identified at each certification. If the data system automatically assigns risks, the CPA must also manually assign other relevant risks. This comprehensive assessment is important for determining how and what nutrition services to provide.

If no medical or dietary risks are identified after completing a comprehensive assessment, assign risk 401 for children ≥ 24 months and all women.

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